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THE SPIRITUAL CONTEST OF THE CHURCH.

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**S E R M O N**

PREACHED IN PHILADELPHIA, SEPT 18, 1833,

BEFORE THE

**AMERICAN BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

FOR

**Foreign Missions,**

AT THEIR

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## S E R M O N .

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### 2 CORINTHIANS X. 4.

*For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds.*

THIS world is in a state of revolt from God. The truth of this representation of the condition of the human family given in the holy Scriptures, is sufficiently obvious to all, who, in the exercise of reason, contemplate their moral character. Admitting the principle, that there is a supreme being, possessing infinite moral perfections, who has created man an intelligent and accountable creature; we cannot consistently account for the present degraded and distracted condition of this world, on any other ground, than that which has been disclosed in the word of God:—that man, having been *created in honor, continued not*.

As soon as man had transgressed, and placed himself in an attitude of resistance against his Creator, under the control of the malignant being, by whose subtle temptation he fell from his high state of purity and happiness; God graciously interposed, and commenced the discovery of a plan of operations, to recover his fallen subjects from the dominion of the adversary, and to re-establish his own government on

the earth. It was so ordained, in his infinite wisdom, that the developement of his plans should be gradually made, and that the conquest should be effected, after a protracted contest. As soon as the dominion of the adversary took place, God gave sufficient indications that he did not design to leave him in peaceful possession. While the enemy was extending and strengthening his fortresses, He, to whom the kingdom belongs, retained one spot of territory, held in possession by a few of his reclaimed subjects, thus asserting his claims, while preparing the way for the coming of the great Captain of salvation, by whom a guilty world was to be redeemed.

When the song of the angels was sung in Bethlehem—Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will to men—when the tragedy of Calvary had been transacted—when the tomb of Joseph had resigned its charge, and the everlasting gates were opened to receive the conqueror of death—then were the preparations completed; and as he ascended to the right hand of his Father, there to reign until all things shall be put under his feet, he sent forth his disciples, to effect this mighty conquest, under his banner, with the commission, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature; he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be damned; and lo! I am with you always, to the end of the world.

To this little army the apostle had attached himself. It is to this contest, the instruments to be employed in it, and the ultimate result of it, that he alludes in our text. In this army every disciple of Christ enlists himself, and should be prepared to endure hard-



ness as a good soldier. In this contest the church has been engaged ever since it has been erected out of the kingdom of darkness. This is the object to which the Christian world are now awaking, to put forth an energy in some measure corresponding with its magnitude. This is the object of our missionary enterprise. It is to expel Satan from the lodgments he has fortified to retain his influence over immortal minds, and perpetuate his control over the eternal destinies of men. It is to regain the world to the moral dominion of God.

Such is the conquest.

Let us proceed to notice the strong-holds to be pulled down; and the weapons to be employed in achieving it.

A strong-hold is a place, either formed by nature, or prepared by art, to secure protection against attack or invasion by a hostile force; and which renders conquest difficult or impossible. By the expression in the text, in its figurative application, we are to understand, whatever there is in the state or condition of man, which is calculated to impede or render difficult his recovery from the dominion of sin and Satan, and to prevent his translation into the kingdom of Christ.

Such a strong-hold exists, in all that belongs to the *spiritual state* and *moral condition* of every individual of the human family. In every human bosom is a strong-hold, fortified against all the claims which God asserts, to reign in its affections, *by natural, total depravity*. This state of the heart is the natural and universal consequence of the fall of man. Adam, after the image of God, in which he had been created,

was defaced by sin, begat a son, in his own image and likeness; and thence through every succeeding generation, man has been shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin. The description which God gave of the internal state of the antideluvian sinners, is equally applicable to the race, in every age and place. He saw that every imagination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually. And with the testimony of the prophet, that the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, perfectly agrees the declaration of the apostle—The carnal mind is enmity against God, it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

That such expressions as these, when considered in connection with the positive character which man has universally sustained, are designed to establish the fact of a natural depravity, transmitted from the fall, and pervading human nature, in all its extent, cannot be reasonably controverted. To interpret them as meaning only that man is naturally destitute of a religious propensity, or bias to good, is obviously inconsistent with the force of the language used. It implies not merely a destitution of grace, but a positive propensity to evil, which as necessarily brings forth sin in action, as a corrupt tree brings forth evil fruit. Therefore the universal result, that there is not a just man on earth, that doeth good and sinneth not. This total depravity, producing hatred to God and his truth and the holiness he requires, resists every influence which is brought to bear upon it, and will continue its resistance, until a stronger power is exerted in its subjugation. Every heart, therefore, being a strong citadel in itself, and being defended by a legion,

requires that a distinct conquest be effected over it, to reduce it to the reign of Christ.

But the *positive character* which is formed, on this foundation of natural depravity, also presents a strong obstacle to the claims of the gospel, and the reconciliation of men to God. That reconciliation requires *repentance*, but man justifies himself in his transgression against God. It requires *faith* in Christ for his justification, but he has an evil heart of unbelief, which he is unwilling to cast away. It requires *obedience*, but as the leopard cannot change his spots, nor the Ethiopian his skin, so neither can they that are accustomed to do evil, learn to do well.

And this opposition of moral character is fortified by artificial barriers.

*Ignorance*, which exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and rejects the light of Divine truth. The world by wisdom know not God. Though the invisible things of God, from the foundation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; yet how universally have men either become totally ignorant of the Deity, or changed his glory into an image, made like to man, or beasts, or creeping things? And where the highest means are bestowed, still their understandings are darkened, through the ignorance that is in them. The god of this world hath blinded the minds of those that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

We have only to trace the history of the human family from the period of the fall to the present time, and to cast our eyes over the earth, and contemplate



the condition of the nations, to learn that it is only where the written revelation of God has been given, that any correct knowledge of his nature and perfections, has been retained; and that, even there, there are few comparatively who retain it in any considerable degree. And hence the fact is accounted for, that under the most exalted advantages of religious improvement, men are to be found, of the greatest intellectual powers, and of the most extensive attainments in literature and science, who, in that which concerns their relation to God and the interests of eternity, have no definite ideas, or distinct understanding.

*Prejudice.*—The human mind is not only indifferent to the requirements of God, but there is a positive, invincible opposition. When men have the opportunity of becoming acquainted with the perfections of God, they do not like to retain him in their thoughts. The doctrines of divine truth are dismissed without examination. The understanding is closed against the admission of light, and the heart is steeled against conviction. The clearest evidence fails to discover the fallacy of errors already embraced, and the fullest demonstration is insufficient to convince of truth. Its claims being so contrary to all their feelings, and requiring an entire change of character, all their consideration of it is attended with a predetermination not to embrace it, and they entrench themselves against its influence, by becoming more confirmed in the false principles, in consistency with which they can indulge, undisturbed, in their sinful propensities.

*The love of this present world.*—Men, through the influence of their natural depravity, and the conscious-



ness of their personal guilt, are unwilling to contemplate themselves as being destined to an eternal state of existence. They are indisposed to look beyond the limits of their life on earth, and attend to interests connected with a future state, as of primary importance. Hence we find the whole world busily and exclusively employed about objects merely temporal, to the entire neglect of every consideration which would awaken them to a discovery of the vanity or insufficiency of the pleasures so highly valued, and possessions so eagerly pursued. This predominant influence of worldly feelings and affections, strengthened by the habits and fashions universally prevalent around, presents a powerful obstacle to the candid consideration and cordial reception of that religion which teaches, that if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him; and that men ought to seek first the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof; that it cannot profit a man, though he should gain the whole world, all its riches, and honors, and pleasures, and lose his own soul; that men should deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; that they should take up their cross, and follow Christ, denying themselves, living by faith in the promises of God, and waiting to receive their everlasting inheritance, and their crown of glory, in another world.

We might proceed to consider the ascendancy of the different tempers and passions over the characters of men, confirming them, as they advance in life, in a course of opposition to the authority of God. We might notice the whole influence of education, exam-

ple, fashion, as being on the side of irreligion, and producing an impression, and forming a character, hostile to its principles and obligations.—In a word, whatever contributes to make up the condition of man as a sinner, as presenting so many points of resistance, and requiring to be pulled down, before any one of the human family can be reclaimed from his state of rebellion against God, and become a subject of that kingdom, the characteristics of which, are righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

But from the condition and character of men individually, we pass to consider the influence of their *social and civil relations*, in view of the ultimate reduction of the world, to the universal reign of the Redeemer.

The whole state of human society, in all its ordinary combinations, and the principles on which men are usually associated together in civil communities, as well as in those which have been established avowedly for religious purposes, form a connected line of defences, encircling the whole earth, against the power of the truth, and in opposition to the claims of God, to be acknowledged and served, as the supreme governor of the world. If we consult the history of man, if we take a view of the nations of the earth, and contemplate their political, and moral condition, and the tendency of their social institutions, whether civil or professedly religious, they will be found but so many strong-holds against God and his cause. Have they not, without exception, when not under his special interposition, entirely lost sight of his supremacy? And how few of the principles of righteousness, es-

tablished by his most holy law, enter into or control the administration of human governments?

Let us look at the *institutions of ancient and modern Paganism*. How soon did the nations of the earth sink into idolatry, after their dispersion at the building of Babel? And what a vast portion of the earth has been embraced within the adamantine walls of this strong-hold of the prince of darkness? However high men of exalted genius might soar, they could never raise themselves out of the stupidity which besotted their minds on the subject of religion. Although in other respects, they became *sages*, in this, they still were *fools*. Their wisest philosophers, and in periods of their highest refinement, taught men possessing immortal souls, and bound to an eternal destiny, to worship and serve the creature, and even the work of their own hands, instead of the Creator; and they themselves practised as they taught.

While the whole history of the world, and especially that of the Jews in the period of the Theocracy, shows the strong propensity of men to fall into idolatry; from the same source we learn, how strongly those who have been brought up in it are bound, and how rarely they are induced to forsake it. Their absurd rites and ceremonies, interwoven with the structure of their governments; and their rules of conduct, according with the worst passions of the depraved heart, and sanctioning every species of crime, all tend to bar the way to the introduction of the knowledge of God, and of the way in which he is acceptably worshipped; and to inflame their hatred against that gospel, which teaches the vanity of idols, and directs them to turn from them to the living God.



In view of the stability and perpetuity of these gigantic powers of wickedness, the question of the prophet may still be asked, Hath a nation changed her gods, which are yet no gods?

When we reflect, how large a proportion of the human race are still involved in all the darkness and degradation of Paganism; that, although eighteen centuries have passed away, since Christ commissioned his church to go forth and attack these fortresses of Satan's empire, instead of being reduced, they have been extending and acquiring strength. When we also take into view the inaccessible fastnesses, which extend far away into regions which have never yet been discovered—where the ship of the navigator has never sailed—where the foot of the civilized traveller has never trod—where the enemy has held his victims for ages, undisturbed,—we may well ask, When, and by what power, shall these fortresses be destroyed, and the habitations of these horrid cruelties be converted into the habitations of praise?

Another strong-hold which raises its formidable front against the extension of the kingdom of Christ in the world, appears in the *immense structure of falsehood and imposition erected by the false prophet*, and the system of policy by which it is defended. While it embraces a territory peculiarly inaccessible, and a people whose habits of life separate them from all others, the system itself is peculiarly calculated to enslave the minds of its subjects, and to confirm an inveterate prejudice against all the means which might enlighten or convert them. The few and easy religious rites in which they are assiduously trained, and rigidly bound to observe, are just sufficient to



give them the impression that they are peculiarly acceptable to God, and to inflate them with a high opinion of their own sanctity; while all the corruption of their hearts is left unsubdued, and no restraint placed upon their lusts. They are thus led to believe that they purchase, at an easy rate, a future heaven of sensual indulgence, well calculated to captivate the imaginations of those whose voluptuous lives give them no higher idea of happiness, than that which is the result of carnal gratification. While therefore every avenue of approach is closed, by their personal habits, their national character, their policy of government, and their deserts of sand, every feeling of prejudice and hatred is excited and cherished against the religion of Christ, and every epithet of contempt heaped upon its professors. This stupendous monument of the art of man, aided by the subtlety of the prince of darkness, has stood and increased in magnitude, for ages past, to impede the progress of truth and righteousness. It bears as yet no marks of decay, but seems, to all human calculation and force, impregnable.

But not only in Pagan and Mohammedan lands, are these fortresses of falsehood erected: they are found also, in numbers and strength, in countries of *civilized men, and where the gospel of Christ has had its most signal triumphs*. They consist, not only in the ambition and usurpation of civil governments,—the corrupt policy with which they are administered,—the distinctions and customs which prevail in the social relations,—the maxims of moral conduct adopted and sanctioned,—direct organized opposition, in the combination of kings and princes of the earth

against the Lord and his anointed, *but in the errors and corruptions of Christianity itself*, and the false purposes to which it has been perverted. The strongholds of error and iniquity which are erected on the territory of nominal christendom, are those from which the greatest danger is to be expected. It has been the policy of the great enemy of the truth and of the happiness of man, not only to fortify his own acknowledged region, but to strengthen his cause, by encroaching, and establishing his places of defence, on the ground which had been wrested from him. In this he has been but too successful. The institutions of christianity have been corrupted by being blended with the inventions of men; and its doctrines have been supplanted by a spurious and false philosophy. Thus have whole countries where the pure doctrines of the gospel had spread, become overrun with error; and churches once pure, retaining the Christian name, have preserved scarcely a trace of the simplicity and purity of spiritual christianity.

But we also behold the singular spectacle of a gigantic structure, made up of ignorance, imposition, pollution and superstition, over which the banner of Christ waves, and claiming to be the only defence of his cause; and yet itself the strongest fortress of the enemy. The pure religion of the gospel has not only been corrupted, for the purpose of aiding the despotic power of civil governments in enforcing oppression; but it has been perverted to the establishment of a system of spiritual despotism over the consciences and souls of men, requiring the most abject and degrading surrender of intellectual independence. Papal superstition presents a stronger front against the

progress of pure and undefiled religion, than that of Paganism; and it will require a harder conflict to destroy the lodgments of error from the bosom of the church itself, and purify its corruptions, than to overcome the opposition of open and declared hostility.

*Infidelity*—claiming for its advocates, superior light, and freedom from the shackles of superstition, and bigotry, and despising all religion, as the effect of tame submission, or base hypocrisy, is another stronghold which is raised by the adversary, to retain his power over his willing subjects, and to impede the conquest of the world to its rightful Lord.

*Speculative infidelity* is comparatively a new fortress of the enemy of truth. It is erected in the very face of revealed religion, and with the declared design to subvert and destroy it. Founded on the assumed insufficiency of the evidences of religion, it enlists all the pride of human reason in its cause.

The old systems of error which have grown up in ages of ignorance, without symmetry or consistency, and composed of ill-assorted materials, are exposed, in all their folly and absurdity, wherever the minds of men become enlightened. Already, in some parts of the world, Paganism begins to totter under the decay of age; and the impression seems to be entertained of its approaching downfall by those who have heretofore placed their confidence in it.

Not so with infidelity. It is just in its youthful vigor. It has enlisted in its support some of the loftiest intellects, and those of high cultivation. It erects the standard of reason, and boasts of its perfection. It exalts the human understanding against the revelation of God. It enlists the pride and self-suffi-



ciency of men. It will be the rallying point of the enemies of the truth, when they shall be dislodged from the refuges of false religion, and when the institutions of superstition shall be subverted; and around its walls, and in its trenches, will the last battle be fought, when the shout of victory shall sound over the earth, in the celebration of the universal triumph of the Redeemer.

We notice but one other obstacle to the universal dominion of Christ in the world. *The continued unbelief and obduracy of the Jews.* For eighteen centuries has this strong-hold stood unmoved by all the assaults which have been made upon it; while it has only become more firm, and increased in strength, by the lapse of time which has passed over it, and the attacks which it has endured. Their continued rejection of the gospel of Christ, has retarded its progress in those parts of the world where they have been dispersed. In no department of opposition to the church of Christ has it been carried on with more bitterness, than in that which is composed of the descendants of those who brought down upon themselves the dreadful imprecation, "*his blood be on us and on our children.*"

But whatever may be the order of events, we know that the conversion of the Jews is inseparably connected with the universal gathering in of the Gentiles. When their hearts shall be subdued by grace—when they shall look on him whom they have pierced, the curse under which they have groaned shall be removed; and the blood which they impiously shed shall wash away the deep stains of their guilt. *And it shall come to pass, in that day, (saith the Prophet,)*



*the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come, which were ready to perish, in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord, in the holy mount, at Jerusalem.* Whether this and similar prophecies, shall have their literal accomplishment, in the return of the people of Israel to their ancient land and city, or not, it is certain, that in the general subjugation of the nations to Christ, their restoration to the favor of God, and their recovery from their long-cherished unbelief, will bear a conspicuous part. Their hitherto invincible prejudice must fall, before the triumphant march of Him to whom the nations belong, when he shall go forth, asserting his rights, conquering and to conquer.

When we survey these strong defences, still standing in their strength, and extending over the globe, nothing but the positive assurance of the word of God could excite the expectation that they shall ever be subdued. But thus assured, we know that they are all destined to be demolished, and that they will all crumble into ruins under the weapons of the church's warfare, and of God's mighty power. Thrones of iniquity shall be subverted. Spiritual wickedness, in his high places, shall be brought down. The world shall be emancipated from the usurpation of Satan. And to Him, to whom the earth belongs, by the two-fold claim of rightful sovereignty and redemption, shall every knee bow, and every tongue confess.

It remains to consider the *weapons* by which this mighty conquest is to be effected.

The weapons of the church's warfare, in subduing the world to the kingdom of Christ, are first described

*negatively. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal.* The cause of Christ is to be advanced by a different class of means from those which are employed by men, in their contests for the establishment or subversion of temporal dominions, or for the carrying into execution of any object of human enterprise. God has been pleased to employ in this warfare the instrumentality of men; but the success of the war depends neither on their numbers nor physical strength, but on the nature of the weapons furnished.

*The conversion of the world is not to be effected by military conquest.* Instead of employing such means to propagate Christianity, its primitive advocates had to go forward, few, feeble, and unaided by an arm of flesh, against all the power of persecution and opposition arrayed against them. By military power such a religion as that of Mohammed may be extended, which is designed to enslave both the body and the mind, and is destitute of spiritual life. And in such manner might the name, and some of the forms, of the Christian religion be imposed upon a people conquered, and reduced to vassalage, by a superior power. But the holy religion of Christ erects its dominion in the hearts of men. It consists, not merely in profession and form, but in the renovation of man as a moral being. It can be imparted by no other power than that which has access to the fountains of the heart, and can turn them as the streams of water, as he pleaseth.

External power may subdue the body, and cause the mind, through fear, to dissemble submission; but it can never secure the homage and devotion of the

soul. Wherever the attempt has been made to extend Christianity by the sword and by conquest, it has been, where spiritual darkness and corruption have prevailed, and where the light and glory of the church had departed.

*The religion of Christ is not to be extended over the world by the power of intellect, or the force of human reasoning, persuasion or eloquence.* Although God employs men of great intellectual powers, and endowments; and although the work, to which he calls them requires mind of high order and cultivation; yet by these alone, nothing could be accomplished. Mere human reasoning, however powerful, is insufficient to convince the depraved mind of the truth; and no persuasive eloquence, though it were that of a seraph, can convert the soul, or dislodge the fatal influence of sin, which sways its powers. What can mere argument or persuasion do, to change the heart, in which sin holds its dominion, and to bring it under the influence of holiness? If men ever profess to surrender to such weapons, that citadel within, which Satan fortifies, remains untouched, and he holds it still in his undisturbed possession.

*This kingdom is not to be advanced and established, either by an alliance with, or aid from, the civil governments of the earth.* From the corrupt principles on which civil governments have been established, and the corrupt policy they pursue, even in their greatest perfection, any alliance of Christianity with them, would only have a tendency to tarnish its purity; and any aid which could be rendered by them, would only operate to promote an outward conformity, from motives of interest, or the influence



of fashion; but could never advance it in its experience and power. Wherever such an alliance has taken place, religion has always been made the obsequious servant of the state; and to become so, it must be rifled of its glory, and degraded, and brought down, from its own high and divine dignity and independence.

Christianity is destined, by its divine Author, to occupy a higher station. However infidelity may sound the alarm of danger of an alliance between church and state in our highly favored country, we will not disguise our expectations, that the religion of Christ is yet to obtain the ascendancy, not only in this, but every other government in the world, and that its principles are to pervade every mode and form of their administration. No form of government, however there may be degrees of excellence, will be perfect, until then: and *then*, whatever may be their form, the people under them will be free and happy. Christianity, we do believe, is yet to ascend every throne, and sway every sceptre, in the world; not as she once ascended the throne of the Cæsars, to be corrupted by the embrace of unsanctified royalty—not to sanction oppression and crime—not to be clothed with purple, and decked with a diadem, to cover the pollutions contracted in her elevation; but by reigning in the hearts of rulers, diffusing, and rendering operative, her principles of justice, equity, and love; purifying the fountains of civil power, and rendering all governments, what they ought to be, blessings to mankind.

It is not by great *religious establishments*, supported by compulsory exactions from the poor, to main-



tain a pampered and subservient priesthood, in splendid idleness; it is not, by legislative enactments of moral duties, either to be violated with impunity, or enforced by the execution of civil penalties,—that this holy religion is to gain its dominion, or exert its benign influence. It is by its silent operation, pervading all hearts, from the lowest to the highest, that it is to make the framers of human laws ministers of peace, and those who execute them promoters of righteousness. This ascendancy of religion, will not be accomplished by the craft or ambition of its professors—not, by their seeking for, or grasping after, political elevation—not by their efforts, by intrigue, or sycophancy, to seize upon, or to guide, the reins of government—not by endeavoring to ascend to the high places of the earth: but it will be, by the resistless energy of the truth, as it shall make its way to the hearts of the great and mighty, as well as the mean and obscure,—teaching them, by its influence, its principles, and its precepts, to be the benefactors, and not the oppressors, of their race—teaching those elevated to the highest stations of honor and power, that they are not exalted, for their own interest, or aggrandizement, but to promote the peace, and happiness, and prosperity, of the human family, and to advance His glory, by whom kings reign, and princes decree justice; and whose ministers they are, to execute his will.

We now notice the *positive* description which is given of the weapons of the church's warfare in subduing the world to Christ. *They are mighty through God.*

Reference to a few passages of Scripture, and a glance at the history of the introduction and progress of Christianity, will be sufficient to illustrate the Apostle's meaning. *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the POWER of God, unto salvation, to every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For Christ sent me, not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel; not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect. For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish, foolishness; but unto us which are saved, it is the POWER of God. But we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews, and Greeks, Christ, the POWER of God, and the wisdom of God.*

From these passages, and many others, it is obvious, that the gospel—and especially the preaching of Christ—is the chief weapon, by which God pleases to exert his mighty power, for the conversion of men. And they cannot be fairly interpreted on any other principle, than that the saving effect is accomplished by the direct exertion of divine power, through it, on the understandings and hearts of men. These weapons are mighty through God; not by any inherent power, but by the influence of the Holy Spirit, making the word of God, quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword. The Apostle, in all the success which attended his exertions, assures us, that he preached the gospel, not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and with power; that faith should not stand, in the wisdom of

men, but in the power of God. He knew that the strong fortress of sin in his own heart, defended as it had been by all the pride of human learning, and pharisaical righteousness, had been subdued by, and induced to surrender to, that power alone. And that the high imaginations of prejudice and self-sufficiency, which had exalted themselves, in his bosom, against the knowledge of God, had been cast down, by the simple exhibition, to his views, of the melting spectacle of Christ crucified.

*The philosophy of the mind* composed no part of the education which the Apostle received when he sat at the feet of Gamaliel. Although he knew nothing of the science, he gives us the result of his own experience in the school of Christ. *The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.* If the modern persuasion of mental science, in its application to theology, to the exclusion of the direct operation of the Holy Spirit on the heart in conversion, had been directly in his view, we cannot conceive of a caution, more applicable to the case, than that which he had given. *Beware, lest any man spoil you, through philosophy, and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.*

Three thousand stubborn hearts were made to yield to Christ, on the day of Pentecost. By what power? The force of argument, contained in Peter's simple sermon? or the fervid eloquence with which it was delivered? Was it because the minds of those con-



verts were gradually opened to the perception of the truth, and that, by their own powers, they were enabled to comprehend and embrace it? The Apostle claims no such honor, either for himself, or them. The weapon which he wielded, with such astonishing effect, was the preaching of Christ—his death and resurrection. And by what power the result took place, he is careful to explain. *This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are all witnesses. Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made this same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. And when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and cried out, Men and brethren, what shall we do?*

It was by the same mighty power attending the preaching of Christ, that such signal success followed the labors of the Apostles, so that before they had all been removed by death, Christian churches had been planted in all the principal cities of the then known world; even in those where human learning had arrived to its highest eminence, and where Pagan superstition had held its most absolute dominion. It was by this power that, within the first century of its existence, Christianity obtained as large an extent of territory, as she has ever occupied at any period since. Her first heralds went every where, displaying the banner of the cross; they penetrated the darkest regions of Satan's empire; and wherever they went, the word of the Lord had free course, and was



glorified, because they went simply, in his name, and strength; and he, every where, worked with them, by his mighty power.

And why was this triumphant commencement so speedily checked? Why, with the exception of this newly discovered continent, to which pure religion has fled, from the oppressions and persecutions to which she was subjected by the despotic powers of the old world—have no new conquests been obtained; while the kingdom of darkness has rolled back her forces, over those places which had been won by the valor of the primitive soldiers of the cross? Does not ecclesiastical history supply a sufficient answer to these inquiries? Christianity became corrupted. False philosophy usurped the place of the pure doctrines of the cross of Christ. Human speculations, or moral lectures, were substituted for the preaching of Christ crucified. The professors of the Christian religion, instead of cultivating personal holiness, became conformed to the world. Instead of making a united and persevering onset against the ancient superstitions, they became divided amongst themselves; and grasping carnal weapons, turned them, in unholy controversy, or bloody persecutions, against each other. The church itself, while it retained the name of Christ, adopting the errors and practices of heathenism, became a strong-hold of superstition and iniquity. Instead of laying hold on the power of God, to go on in obtaining spiritual conquests to Him, as her Lord, she sought to strengthen her own temporal power, and to advance her own aggrandizement, by erecting her throne above the thrones of the kingdoms of the earth, and exacting from prostrate worshippers an idola-

trous homage to herself. In a word, all that claimed to be the church of Christ, became *anti-Christ*.

And why, since the period of the Reformation, when Luther, and Calvin, and Knox, and their noble compeers, recovered these long lost weapons, and wielded them so successfully against the monstrous ecclesiastical tyranny which had established itself; has so little been attempted, and such small success attended the attempts which have been made, to extend the gospel to the heathen? Why is it, but that the church, however reformed from the errors of Popery, have never recovered primitive purity, and faith, and zeal? That she has not attained uncorruptness in doctrine, and that her ministers have not imbibed the apostolic spirit, to fulfil the commission of the Savior, to go and preach the gospel to every creature? Why is it, that after eighteen centuries have revolved, since this commission was given, with the engagement which secures success, do we now cast our eyes over the earth, and see all these strong-holds presenting their proud front in defiance? Why, but because these weapons, which are mighty through God to pull them down, have not, with the *energy of faith and prayer, laying hold of the arm of the Almighty*, been directed against them?

Whatever other means may be used to prepare the way for evangelizing the heathen—though the Scriptures are to be translated and disseminated in all languages and in all lands—though stations are to be selected for the establishment of schools—though the press is to be employed in the publication of religious tracts—and all the various machinery put in operation which Christian benevolence can devise—yet, we are not to forget, that the preaching of the gospel is the



great instrument God has appointed, and determined to make efficient, in subduing the nations to himself. This he has charged his church to employ, and has reserved the glory of the power to himself.

*The instrumentality and the efficiency are inseparably connected.* The weapons which are mighty through God, are to be employed by the church. The world is no more to be converted to Christ without the united exertions of the church to send the gospel to every creature, than it can be effected without the exertion of God's almighty power. As the walls of Jericho stood unmoved, until the armies of Israel had encompassed them; and as they fell to the ground by no other visible means than the sounding of the trumpets; so, when the soldiers of the cross shall have marched around every strong-hold of Satan in the world, and the gospel trumpet shall have been sounded beneath their walls, they will be levelled to the earth; and the saints of the Most High, taking possession in his name, shall send forth their acclamations of victory, to which the voices in heaven shall respond, *The kingdoms of the world have become the kingdom of the Lord, and he shall reign forever and ever.*

A few reflections naturally arise, from the view we have taken of this subject.

*Christ, the great Head of the church and Captain of salvation, calls upon all his disciples to engage in an enterprise of no less magnitude than the conversion of the world.* While it is the obvious obligation of every one to bear a part in this undertaking, it is the peculiar happiness and privilege of Christians of the present day, that by union of purpose and division of labor, they may all be employed in aiding the spread of the gospel of salvation, either at home or



abroad, through the various institutions which have been organized, and are now in successful operation, for that purpose. So that every individual, of whatever age or sex, or condition in life, may assist in employing those weapons which are mighty through God, to the recovery of man and the conversion of the world.

*We have reason to rejoice that this object is more prominently presented to the eye of the church, and that exertions are more directly making for its accomplishment, than at any previous period.* Within the last half century, more has been done for the spread of the gospel, than in all the time that intervened from the days of the Apostles. Light appears to have broken in upon the church, as by special revelation, as to the obligation devolved upon it by the special commission of the Savior with regard to a perishing world. A simultaneous impulse has been given in various parts of the Christian world, and amongst various denominations of Christians; and although it has been but partial, and few aroused to action, compared with the whole number of the professed followers of Christ; yet much has already been effected. The standard of the cross has been erected on almost every territory of darkness. Possession has been taken in the name of the Lord of Hosts. Rallying points have been fixed. The van have gone forward; and the conquests already obtained by them, few as they are, and scattered at remote distances from each other, give an earnest of the victories which shall crown them when the ranks shall be filled up, and the hosts of the Lord shall march forth in their full numbers and strength.

*This is no visionary enterprise.* Its final success is certain. It is no hazardous contest. The mighty power of God is secured to give effect to every well-directed stroke of the weapons of his appointment. The battle is the Lord's. And however disproportioned the force employed may be, in the eye of reason, to the magnitude of the object, he can give the victory to a few as well as a multitude. *Faith* is to occupy the place of ordinary calculation; and *prayer* will draw down strength from above. If, like the faithless spies, our hearts shall faint, and we say, the cities are walled and very great, and there are giants, the sons of Anak, men of great stature, we are not able to go up against them, for they be stronger than we—then the possession of the land will be delayed until another generation more faithful shall arise, who shall reap the glory which our pusillanimity had failed to secure. But, if in faith and confidence in his power who commands us to proceed, we shall go on, it will be found that the defences of the enemy have already departed from them; and that the terror of the Lord having fallen upon them, will render the conquest easy.

*Present indications seem to give peculiar ground to believe that the time has come, or at least is not far distant, when the kingdoms of the earth shall be given to the saints of the Most High, to be held for their Lord.* Simultaneously with the awaking of the church to the object, singular changes have been going on in the relative positions and internal state of the nations. While the solitary missionary of the cross has been making his way, unknown and unheeded by those who have been guiding the helms of civil government; God has been so controlling their policy and directing their movements, as to remove



out of his way insurmountable obstacles, which would have prevented his access to the heathen. His providence is evidently going before, as the breaker up of the way, leveling the mountains, exalting the vallies, making the crooked ways straight, and the rough places plain.

While we witness, in some parts of the world, symptoms of the spontaneous decay of paganism; we see, in others, a commencement of the downfall of the ascendancy which the man of sin has exercised over the political movements of the nations of Christendom. We see the invincible obstacles which have defended the dominions of the man of sin from intrusion, beginning to give way. We see the restrictions removed which had prohibited access to the city where the Son of God offered his sacrifice of atonement, and the land where his feet trod, and where the apostles first published the gospel of peace. We see the inveterate prejudices of the rulers of the dark places of the earth against the religion of Christ, subsiding. We see the distance to which the nations were removed from each other, diminishing, and they approximating, by the wonderful improvements of science and art. We see the spirit of discovery penetrating the darkness of unknown regions, and lifting the veil which has covered them from the sight of civilized man. We see the spirit of pure and evangelical religion reviving where it had been extinguished by a cold and lifeless philosophy. We see the nations becoming sick of war and bloodshed, and substituting a peaceful policy for the lust of conquest and the glory of military achievement. We see the principles of civil and religious liberty making their way, unnerving the arm of despotic power, severing the



bonds, and knocking off the fetters, which ecclesiastical and civil tyranny had imposed on the consciences and the bodies of men.—What do these signs in the heavens and on the earth indicate, but the coming of the Prince of peace, to assert his claims, and to establish his kingdom of righteousness, over this long oppressed and guilty world?

*In view of the long unfulfilled command of the Redeemer to send the gospel to all nations—of the certain declarations of Scripture with regard to the conversion of the world—of the providential indications of the approach of that period, when he shall come to claim the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession—of the fact, that these triumphs are to be obtained by the power of God attending human instrumentality—of the visible success which has more recently attended the partial and feeble efforts which have been made—the followers of Christ are called upon and encouraged to more vigorous, united, and extended exertions in the great cause of missions.*

On the Christian church of this age, has come down all the responsibility which has been descending and accumulating ever since the risen Redeemer took his departure from Mount Olivet, to ascend to the right hand of his Father. And from the peculiar blessings of providence and grace bestowed on the *Christians of this land*—the extensive territory occupied—the high privileges of civil and religious liberty possessed—the extensive means of intellectual and moral culture enjoyed—the facilities of intercourse opening, by navigation and commerce, with all parts of the world—a great part of that responsibility rests upon *them*.

Let the church arise, clear as the sun, fair as the moon, and terrible as an army with banners. Honor and glory are in reserve for the church of *this age*, if she shall faithfully meet her responsibilities, and come up, in her strength, to the help of the Lord against the mighty. *She shall witness the introduction of the millennium*, and share in the glory of the first victories by which it shall be introduced. Then shall she arise, and shine, for her light shall have come, and the glory of the Lord shall have risen upon her. She shall increase in purity and splendor, as she shall extend her empire over the earth, and fill it with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord. The darkness which had brooded over the nations, shall recede before her. Idolatry, infidelity, superstition, oppression, shall crumble under her feet—life, happiness, and joy, spring up in her path. She sheds celestial light on the habitations of men—and more than Eden's bloom adorns the earth.

“Clothed with the sun, and in her train the moon,  
And on her head a coronet of stars,  
And girdling round her waist, with heavenly grace,  
The bow of mercy bright, and in her hand  
Immanuel's cross, her sceptre, and her hope.”

“Desire of every land, the nations come  
And worship at her feet”—————

“The desert blossoms, and the barren sings.  
Justice and mercy, holiness and love,  
Among the people walk; Messiah reigns!  
And earth keeps Jubilee, a **THOUSAND YEARS!**”